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CENTRAL INTELLIGENCE BULLETIN



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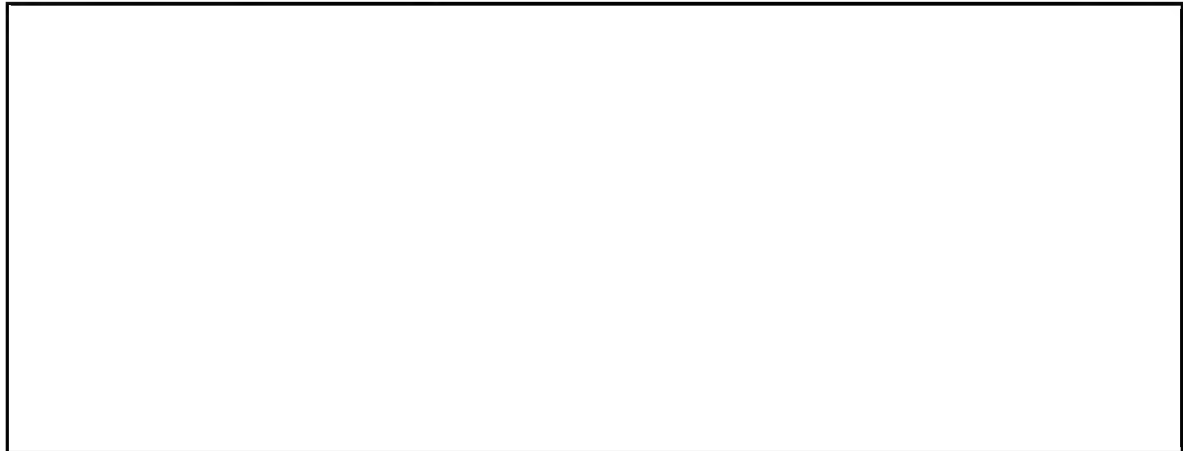
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Iran-Iraq: The long-smoldering dispute between Iraq and Iran over navigation rights on the Shatt-al-Arab River, which

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controls the approaches to the oil refinery of Abadan, has again broken out. Iranian insistence on 17 February that henceforth its personnel, rather than Iraqi pilots, handle tankers calling at the refinery has halted tanker traffic. Heretofore, only Iraqi pilots have worked on the run to Abadan. As many as two dozen tankers, chartered by the consortium of Western oil companies which operates Iran's oil industry, are probably already involved. Meanwhile a shortage of storage space has forced the Abadan refinery to cut back production from the normal 350,000 barrels a day to less than a third of this figure on 20 February. Output probably will be cut further--perhaps to 50,000 barrels a day--in an effort to avert a complete shutdown, which would further weaken Iran's already strained economy.

[redacted] Page 7) (Map)

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[redacted]

*USSR: Foreign Minister Gromyko told the Finnish foreign minister recently that neither he nor Khrushchev will attend the UN General Assembly session, which resumes on 7 March. He stated, however, that Khrushchev was still willing to come to the US for talks with the President. Gromyko's remarks suggest that Khrushchev has reversed his decision since First Deputy Premier Kosygin's assertion to the West German ambassador in early February that Khrushchev would attend the UN meeting. The Soviet premier probably recognizes that his decision to exploit Lumumba's death to the maximum and renew his attacks on Hammarskjold will make a sharp US-Soviet clash unavoidable, and that his personal participation in such a debate would undermine the prospects of a meeting with the President during the UN session.

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The Shatt-al-Arab Question

Between the Persian Gulf and a point a few miles north of Khorramshahr the Iranian-Iraqi frontier runs along the low-water mark on the Iranian shore of the Shatt-al-Arab except for two short stretches opposite the major Iranian ports of Khorramshahr and Abadan, where it follows the thalweg --the middle of the river--so as to leave these two ports in Iranian waters. Sea-going vessels bound for these Iranian ports thus have to pass through Iraqi waters. Navigation on the river is governed by the Iranian-Iraqi treaty of 4 July 1937.

For several years Iran has periodically agitated for a commission to negotiate changes in the 1937 treaty and has threatened to take unilateral action if Iraq refuses to co-operate. This treaty recognizes most of the Shatt as Iraqi territorial waters. Tehran has complained that the treaty was invalid because it was signed under British pressure. Despite this view, Iran was willing to leave control of the Shatt to Iraq as long as the Basra Port Authority was, for practical purposes, under British control.

An important change in the Iranian position took place following the July 1958 coup in Iraq which brought Qasim to power. Viewing the Qasim regime as basically unfriendly and wary of the presence of Soviet technicians in Basra, Iran began to demand a greater voice in control of the Shatt, including adoption of the thalweg principle along the entire length of the river. Since 1958 there has been a series of incidents between the two countries. Iran's present insistence on use of its pilots is its most ambitious effort thus far to pressure Iraq to begin negotiating. However, fully a third of Iran's oil production of more than 1,000,000 barrels a day is refined at Abadan, and with an already shaky economy the government could ill afford more than a token shutdown.

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